



May 31, 2013

MADIGAN: LEGISLATION REQUIRING REVIEW OF SUSPICIOUS ADULT DEATHS SENT TO GOVERNOR'S DESK

Measure Would Require Review of At-Home Deaths of At-Risk Elderly, Disabled Adults

Springfield — Attorney General Lisa Madigan today announced a bill passed unanimously by the General Assembly would establish review teams of medical professionals, service providers and law enforcement agencies to evaluate suspicious deaths of at-risk elderly or people with disabilities living in private Illinois residences. The measure, sponsored by Rep. Greg Harris (D-Chicago) and Sen. Bill Haine (D-Alton), now goes to the Governor for his signature.

"When at-risk older adults or people with disabilities die in circumstances that raise concerns about abuse or neglect, we must ensure that those deaths are carefully investigated," Madigan said. "By establishing review teams of law enforcement, medical and social service professionals, we can learn what happened in each case and also use that information to improve the state's services and protections for older adults and people with disabilities who receive at-home care."

House Bill 948 includes many critical requirements to protect adults aged 60 and older and people with disabilities between 18 and 59 years of age who are living in their homes. Madigan's office worked with the bill sponsors and the Department on Aging to craft provisions directing the Department on Aging to establish a Fatality Review Team Advisory Council and regional interagency fatality review teams. These multi-disciplinary teams of professionals would have the authority to evaluate suspicious deaths of adults resulting from alleged instances of abuse or neglect.

"This gives an often marginalized, at-risk population new defenses against abuse and exploitation," Haine, the proposal's Senate sponsor said. "We have an obligation to protect those who cannot protect themselves."

The legislation is modeled on the Abuse Prevention Review Team Act, which requires the expert review of deaths and sexual assaults that occur in long-term care facilities, and the Child Death Review Team Act. It is designed to require the investigation of suspicious deaths that fall outside the purview of those statutes. There are currently no review teams assigned to evaluate the deaths of adults aged 18 to 59 with physical or mental disabilities living in private residences.

The teams would bring together professionals from different disciplines to share their expertise, including physicians with expertise in dealing with abuse and neglect of adults, State's Attorneys, law enforcement officers, social service agencies that serve adults with mental illness and developmental disabilities, coroners, and emergency medical professionals. Review team leaders would serve on the Advisory Council, which would coordinate the teams' efforts. The bill requires review teams to report their findings to the appropriate authorities and the Advisory Council.

The Attorney General's legislation is part of an ongoing effort to increase protections for Illinois' most at-risk residents. Madigan launched "Operation Guardian" in 2010 to ensure the safety of nursing home residents in Illinois. Teams of state and local agencies conduct compliance checks at nursing home facilities to review safety concerns. The initiative grew out of and expands on the Attorney General's previous work to shut down south suburban Emerald Park Nursing Home when it was found to be housing numerous sex offenders and other felons.

Madigan has also successfully worked to protect nursing home residents by requiring background checks and a criminal history analysis for residents to identify those who might pose a threat to others in the facilities. In addition, Madigan authored the Resident's Right to Know Act that requires nursing homes to complete an annual report detailing the facility's standard of care, service and security issues to provide better information to residents and their families.

[Return to May 2013 Press Releases](#)

